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A N S W E R

T O T H E

AUTHOR of the Two LETTERS

T O T H E

CLERGY of IRELAND.



D U B L I N :

Printed by S. POWELL, in Crane-Lane, 1749.

(Price Two-Pence.)

A. N. S. W. E. R.

AUTHOR OF THE

Calendar of Ireland



DUBLIN:

Printed by J. W. & J. G. Smith, 11, St. Michael's Street.

1847.



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A N S W E R, &c.

S I R,

AS you have thought it proper to conceal your Name and Profession from the Public, it would not become me to attempt making you better known, tho' I really think I might do this with very great Honour to yourself, and with very little Pains to me. However, the Reasons you may have for thus keeping yourself private, you are best Judge of, which I shall not at present inquire into; but shall rather chuse to indulge you, and comply with what you so modestly stile *Oddities*.

The Obligations however, which you have laid upon those of the Order I belong to, are such, as must needs call upon every one of us for a suitable Return; and as an unworthy Member of that Community for which you are pleased to shew so tender and generous a Concern, permit me to take this Opportunity of giving you this early and public Assurance of my most hearty and sincere Thanks.

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Did I intend this Letter altogether for an Encomium on your worthy Performance, I am sensible I should not want for Matter to expatiate upon; but, diffident of my Abilities, in a Matter of so great Delicacy as that of bestowing due Praises on one of so correct a Taste, as I presume you to be, I chuse not to gratify so readily my earnest Desire, to which did I yield a too indulging an Ear, would, I fear, lead me to say more than what your Modesty could well hear without blushing: I am perfectly satisfied that, tho' I should say a great deal, yet I would fall short of what you so justly deserve: Upon this Account, as well as upon the former already mentioned, it is, that I wave this otherwise pleasing Task, and come rather to the main Point of my Letter.

Your Scheme is such as will necessarily gain the Approbation of all who wish well to the Distressed, and to those that groan under the Hardships which attend the Want of the common and most necessary Supplies of Life.

Deeply affected with the Thoughts of this, about Fourteen Years ago, I laid before a few intimate Friends of mine a Scheme not unlike the one you have lately favoured the World with, and should I affirm, that I had then some Thoughts of reducing into a proper Form what had been the Subject of my Conversation with them, and trying what Success it would have met with from the Public, I should speak nothing but the Truth. What prevented my Proceeding further in this great and useful Work, was the indifferent Prospect I had of succeeding: I was confidently told then, that, I must expect
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to meet with strong Opposition from the Laity, whom these Friends represented to me as strangely averse to any thing that in any wise regarded the Clergy, or their Welfare ; so that I laid my Scheme aside, and never thought of it more ; looking upon it as very desirable, tho' judging it at the same time impracticable, from the many strong Prejudices I believed the Laity fondly entertained against those of my Profession.

Such being my Notion of the Matter, and taking for granted, that Things were strictly as they were represented to me, you may easily guess what an Impression your two Letters must have made upon me, when I found you, who give yourself out for a Layman, so well disposed in Favour of our Order, and that none can wish more earnestly for its better Being than you seem to do. This, I must freely own, seems to me almost a Prodigy of a Change, and that you may prevail with the rest of your Fellow-Creatures, to bring them over to a like happy and charitable Frame of Mind, is, as you may readily guess, my sincere Wish and Desire.

You may think as oddly of me as you please, but this is an unquestionable Fact : I was ever of the Mind to believe, that no Layman would be at the same Pains you have put yourself to, in order to serve the Clergy ; therefore cannot forbear thinking you to be one of our Order under this feigned Title : For tho' amidst this considerable Body, the Laity, there might be some few, (and this I am the more apt to believe to be so, from what you tell me,) who esteem and regard such among us, as shew that Sincerity and Concern for true Religion, without which it would be an unpardonable

unpardonable Presumption in us to require it, yet I am bold to say that in the general, they are naturally much prejudiced against us, and upon every trifling Surmise, be it right or wrong, are always apt to make their Advantage of it, and to improve every unlucky Circumstance to our Disadvantage by representing us as a Nuisance, rather than of any Benefit to the Commonwealth.

I could not help thinking, that Men thus prepossessed, could be but little affected with any thing relating to the Clergy, and, at best, indifferent to what befalleth this large Body, nay, my slender Experience of Mankind I thought did not contribute a little to strengthen me in my Notion of them, and do verily believe I should have removed from this Stage with the like Belief, had you not, by your two Letters informed me very seasonably of the Mistake I have lain under these several Years past. I must now ingenuously profess myself a Convert of your own making, and since made sensible by your Arguments, that there are some of that Body not so averse to the Clergy as I fancied them to be; I do hereby solemnly promise to use my best Endeavours to free myself from those Prejudices, which, I own, I too fondly indulged against the Laity, and to lay hold of every Opportunity to do them the Justice they may so lawfully claim, especially if they unanimously join you in encouraging a SCHEME, which, if carried on and managed with the same Zeal, Candour and Prudence, that you have offered it to the World, must be productive of infinite Service, when by the like seasonable Supply, many Protestant Sub-
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jects will surely become valuable and good Members to the Commonwealth, whom Distress and a wretched Condition might otherwise have betrayed into utter Ruin.

No Difficulty occurs to me at present as to the intended Success of your Scheme. Such of the Clergy as are blessed, not only with considerable Benefices, but also with plentiful Estates, which must needs raise them above the tearing Thoughts of living sparingly, in order to make some scanty Provision for their Families, will, I am satisfied, contribute with great Alacrity and largely, for the securing of a Fund, which alone can give Life to the ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION. I am very confident, that there is not a Kingdom that can come up to *Ireland*, or prize itself more justly upon its Blessing of having at the Head of its Church, a Set of most reverend Archbishops and Bishops, whose extensive Charity upon all Occasions shines conspicuously; and their Goodwill and Humanity to the inferior Clergy are beyond Example; the like happy Prospect must surely give a new Vigour to our Hopes, of seeing them lead the Way in patronizing and encouraging this truly charitable and necessary Plan. I entertain a no less advantageous Opinion of our Dignitaries and other Gentlemen of the Clergy, who, possessed of very considerable Preferments, are likewise in such a happy Situation of Life, as must necessarily set them above securing by such-like Provision a Maintenance for their Widows and Offspring; these Gentlemen, I say, will chearfully come into the Measures requisite for the supporting of this Fund,
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and will be followed by our Noble Lords, Commoners, and the rest of our wealthy Gentry, who, I make no Doubt, will by their large Contributions, shew, how much they value what is good in itself, and how well inclined they are to join in every thing which may support and establish it upon the most lasting Foundations.

I am absolutely of your way of thinking, it is to be hoped, that the Clergy of this Kingdom, from their Behaviour in the late troublesome Times, must have approved themselves in some Measure to His Majesty ; and as he has ever hitherto rewarded with a princely Munificence the smallest Services done to his Royal Person, or to the Government in general, I make no Doubt of the more easy Success from this very Circumstance of obtaining a Charter, which may empower the Incorporated Society to make such Purchases as may enable the said Society to make a larger Provision for the Widows and Children of a Set of Men, who, in their several Stations, have shewn an unshaken Loyalty for His Majesty and Royal Family, as well as an inviolable Attachment to our present mild and happy Constitution both in Church and State. What must still give Life to our Hopes, in being represented in an advantageous Light to his Majesty, is, that we have in our Primate one whose sole Delight is in doing good, and who makes no other Use of his extensive Interest and most eminently distinguished Friends, but that of bringing to bear the more successfully his generous and glorious Views of heaping Kindnesses upon others. Upon this Head, I cannot forbear mentioning what I myself heard His Grace say, when congratulated



lated upon His Promotion. His Declaration was such as must needs make him appear highly valuable to the World, but more so to such as being happy in his Acquaintance, must know how to prize Words, to which Honour and Truth give Weight: "If any thing can add Pleasure to my Promotion, it is the Prospect I have of being serviceable to others." Hence I think, that, we may very justly expect all Success from your well-meaning Views, when we have so powerful a Patron, and so gracious an Advocate to give to our Cause the most favourable Turn it will admit of.

From what has been offered, I will now take it for granted, that your Views are fully answered, and that your SCHEME will meet with no Sort of Opposition; I must now ask how and by what Method do you mean that this your Plan should be put in Execution, so as to prevent Jealousies and Complaints?

It is no easy Task I know to unite all Opinions in a Matter of this Kind, which does not offer itself to the Mind of every one in the same Light; but tho' this may prove a Discouragement to such as lay themselves out for serving the Public, to find their good Designs not only ill interpreted, but even repaid, with the greatest Ingratitude; yet I must observe this to you, that every Subscriber will expect, and I cannot help saying very justly too, that his Widow or Children will share of this Benefaction, should their Circumstances be such as entitle them to it. Now were Favour or Friendship, or the Ties of Blood, to take Place of Justice and Equity, as this would lay the Way

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open to hurt one, in order to serve another, you must perceive, that hereby the End of your charitable Scheme would be quite subverted ; and what makes me the more anxious about the Matter, is not my being a Party concerned, but that I am conscious, from my own Experience, that the best of Designs are liable to the grossest Abuses from the like Practices, nor should I have once hinted this, if many Instances of the Kind did not daily occur to strengthen this Apprehension : What State or Condition of Life is there that cannot complain of Grievances of this Nature ?

Few in the Church can raise themselves above a moderate Income : Their Merits and Labours, which should entitle them to something more considerable, will not avail them any thing towards Preferment ; and such as have powerful Friends, or who can claim Affinity or Ties of Blood with those in Power, have the only good Title to expect Preferment.

Should the like Views sway in the Execution of your Scheme, I cannot help fearing that it would shortly give a Check to those who might with great Chearfulness of Spirit carry on the Subscription.

I must, in Justice to you, needs think, that from your proposing a large Committee, composed, besides the Head Officers, of forty-two Members, some whereof are to be Bishops and Beneficed Clergymen, some not beneficed, and some Laymen, as a Means of securing an equal Distribution of this Charity, but do not see how by this Means you will effectually remove the Evil I so justly apprehend, unless this, or
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some such-like previous Rule; be laid down, and strictly and religiously abided by, “ that
 “ no Regard shall be had to Friendship or
 “ Favour, but that every Distribution shall scrupulously be calculated, agreeably to the distressed Circumstances of such as are intituled
 “ to the Benefaction.” If a close Eye be had to this Rule, and a Resolution taken never to deviate from it, this will preserve Life and Spirit to your Scheme, as long as there will be a Prospect of an equal and impartial Distribution.

You are pleased to make Mention of the Churches abroad, and of those particularly of the *United Provinces*, with respect to the Clergymen’s Widows; and this you brought in as a further Inducement to the successful carrying on of your Scheme in this Kingdom. I must beg Leave to present my Readers with a more particular Account of this Scheme, as it may be acceptable to them, to see into the Method of others, and of Service towards the better settling of your Scheme, yet in its Infancy.

The States, at the Time the Reformation took footing in their Provinces, seized upon the Church Lands, and ever since have kept them in their own Hands. It is out of the Revenues of these Ecclesiastical Estates that they provide a decent and becoming Income for their Clergy, which is regularly paid them without any Deductions or exorbitant Fees: It often falleth out there with the Clergy, as it doth with us in this Kingdom, that they have no other Dependance than their yearly Income, and are so circumstanced, as not to be able to make any Provision for their numerous Families; the States took

this into Consideration, and granted Pensions to their Widows, from fifteen to sixty Pounds Sterling, which last Sum is the largest, and granted by these two great Cities only, *Amsterdam* and *Rotterdam*.

As to the Province of *Zealand*, where no such Provision was made for the Widows of deceased Clergymen, this Deficiency was, in some Measure, compensated in another Way; therefore it will not be improper to observe, that the States of that Province, at least, at *Middleburgh*, do allow to every Clergyman's Child, from the Instant of its Birth, an annual Sum of fifty Guilders, or five Pounds Sterling, which is continued to them during the Father's Stay among them, and 'till the Children be bred up to some Profession which may set them very probably above Want: This way of providing for a Clergyman's Child may seem precarious, as the Life of the Father is, at best, uncertain; but in this Case, Ministry is held in such Esteem, that, tho' their Circumstances should be reckoned but very low, as this Supply drops with their Father's Lives, yet great Care is taken of his Orphans and Widow: Add to this, that from a small Fund, which is left at the Discretion of the Synods, the Members whereof are made of the Clergy, Elders, Deacons, and the several Deputies of each City from each Province, there is an Assistance allowed to every poor Clergyman's Son to maintain him at the University, where, be it said to the eternal Honour and Praise of the Professors there, they freely give their private Tuition, without any Regard to Reward, and shew the same Affection to those on whom they bestow

bestow their Favours, as they do to those who pay them Tuition-Money, provided they behave well, and improve themselves under their Care. This Acknowledgment I must pay them in Return for their Favours shewn me, from whom, tho' a Foreigner, yet regarding me as a Clergyman's Son, they never took a single Farthing.

In the Year 1727, the *French* Clergy of the *United Provinces*, considering the Number of the small Pensions allowed to their Widows, and which could not maintain them, agreed among themselves, (tho' not unthankful to their Benefactors,) to raise a Fund whereby they might have the Comfort of leaving their Widows and Families after them, better provided for : They published their Scheme, with the Approbation of the States annexed to it, and earnestly invited the Laity to concur with them, and join them in encouraging so Praise-worthy an Attempt : They afforded immediate Proofs of their approving of this Design, by contributing very largely towards the Fund ; so that from a Computation made the Year following, they found themselves in a Condition of maintaining five Widows at Fifteen Pounds Sterling, exclusive even of what they are entituled to from the States : So extensive was every one's Bounty and Munificence towards this useful SCHEME !

This SCHEME, as I am credibly informed, is carried on still every Year, so that the Stock must have encreased greatly ; and what, from their Annual Subscription, and what from Legacies and Donations, the Widows and Children of the Clergy are happily freed from the woeful Apprehensions of Beggary, and of Course, of that
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Slight and Contempt which generally attend a depending Condition.

The Method of proceeding, in the carrying on this Fund, was this, over and above what I have just now been mentioning, at least if my Memory fails me not, Every Clergyman, serving a Church, or called to officiate in any of the Churches, was to give a certain Sum towards this Fund, and every Year so much in Proportion to his Income; upon Failure of Compliance to this Rule, their Widows were debarred the Privilege of claiming Title to this additional Benefaction. But upon every one's contributing his Contingency, which stood upon undeniable Record, in this Case, every Widow was as surely entituled to an equitable and impartial Share in the Interest arising from this Stock. And, in my humble Opinion, this is the only sure way of discharging honourably all and every public Trust.

This Method used abroad I have chosen to dwell the longer upon, because from its Success we are to judge what we may expect from the SCHEME you now propose; and I apprehend, that every Incumbent and Curate should allow towards securing a Fund, one Pound Sterling for every hundred Pounds of the real Value of his Living, when presented to it, whether by the Crown, a Bishop, or any Lay-Patron, and this to be given once for all, unless he be removed, or has any additional Living, in which Case he will give again, in Proportion to the Increase of his Income; now by this Method, which in no wise affects the Annual and Voluntary Subscription, I must think the common

mon Stock will swell insensibly, and enable the Incorporated Society to grant a larger Allowance to every distressed Family of the Clergy, and screen it from Contempt, the inseparable Companion of Want.

I am sensible, that this Method will admit, at first Sight, of some Difficulty, which every Incumbent will not perhaps have it in his Power to get over : How few have it in their Power to command such a Sum at the time of their coming into a Living when all the expensive Charges are answered ? the taking out of Patents, the paying the First-Fruits, Port-Corn, Induction from the Bishop, and several other unavoidable Expences, which drain a Purse never so well filled ? I can give no other Answer to this weighty Objection than this, that, the great Advantage which must arise to our Families from this Step, must make us over-look the present Inconveniences we put ourselves immediately under, until some new Way be thought of, to lighten the heavy Burden which attend, in particular, the Crown Livings. But, as there is no Scheme, tho' calculated for a general Good, but what, at its first setting out, meets with some Inconvenience or other, I shall not trouble myself with any other Way for levelling to the Ground this Partition-wall. Perhaps they who have the Power in their own Hands, may save me the Trouble, and hereby enable us to enlarge our Benefactions. I may venture boldly to answer for my worthy Brethren and myself, that we will gladly contribute our Mite. Be the Success of this your SCHEME great, or of no Significancy, our Obligations to you are in no wise hereby lessened. You have opened

opened a Way to relieve our wretched and distressed Condition: Should it meet with Success, you must have the Blessings of those many Families who will be relieved by your Means. And should it fall short of your good Wishes, they must, if not wilfully ungrateful, never forget the signal Favour you intended them; And as one to whom you unknowingly intended this great Good, I beg I may subscribe myself,

S I R,

Your ever-obliged

Humble Servant,

and Sincere Friend.

Leinster, August
the 5th, 1749.

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